CONFIDENTIAL   ; 8 MAR 198 ´

Suggestions for the NIC Conference

Besides the obvious questions we are always concerned about, I suggest we examine the following proposition: (1) We produce too many National Estimates; and (2) the Community produces too little military analysis on third country wars.

Although I believe National Estimates have improved a great deal in quality and relevance to policy issues, I submit a fair number of them should not be prepared as National Estimates, or, if they were, should be defined more narrowly. I very much doubt that, in the political and economic areas, addressing an issue as a National Estimate per se gives it more credence and influence downtown than if it were addressed in a DI Intelligence Assessment or as an informal DI or NIC memorandum. And where the interagency process does give an assessment somewhat more influence, it may not be worth the added time and cost required. Consequently, I believe that the following questions be asked before a proposal is approved as an NIE (or SNIE): Why should this paper be an NIE? and/or: If a NIE on this general subject is appropriate, which questions should it address?

There are several possible reasons for preparing a NIE. These include:

o   A felt need among key consumers for a Community product; this is generally the case for military estimates.

o   The existence of substantial expertise in several intelligence agencies on a topic of major policy concern.

o   Known significant differences of views among agencies which could make a substantial difference to an assessment of a major issue.

o   In some cases, the inability or unwillingness of individual intelligence components to address a major issue in a sufficiently broad and integrated fashion.

In a perfect world, NIEs should be brief and should focus on the critical questions about which top policymakers are uncertain. They should be designed mainly at helping the policy community think about a problem and should focus on major judgments and judgmental differences. Detailed information and analysis in principle should have been prepared by the various departments in building block studies. In practice, this ideal is often unattainable, but we should try to come as close to it as possible.

With respect to military analysis, especially on Third World countries, the DI tradition is basically repertorial. This tradition goes back to the Current Intelligence Division of OSR, and has been carried on in the area offices since the reorganization. There is little analysis of

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

military strategy, tactics, or performance, in minor wars, or even in major ones such as the Iran-Iraq war. Indeed, most analysts do not have the background to assess land or sea engagements from the point of view of military commanders.

A dramatic exception to this general rule is ⬚ two   25X1
outstanding articles on the Falklands conflict, but unfortunately the exceptions bring out the inadequacy of most other intelligence products on military issues even more starkly. For example, I do not get any clear impression of the capabilities and performance of the opposing sides in Chad. And other than counting units and numbers of equipment, I get little sense of how effectively the Iranians and Iraqis are employing their manpower and firepower in their war. An example of bad military analysis was a recent NESA article on an Iranian air threat against the Southern Gulf. The article pointed to the destruction of the Iraqi off-shore oil terminals as an indication of Iranian capabilites. In fact, these terminals were destroyed by landing forces on the terminals and blowing them up, not by air attack. Except for destroying a few storage tanks, the sustained Iranian air attacks early in the war were generally ineffective. It would have been useful to learn something about the efficiency of Iranian pilots, and whether or not Iranian capabilities had improved over the past three years against specialized targets.

Good concrete suggestions on how to solve this problem are beyond my ken, but I believe it should be raised so that more knowledgeable people, like ⬚ can address it.   25X1

2

CONFIDENTIAL